The Dark Enlightenment | Captivating Youth to Embrace Monarchy

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> **“If Americans want to change their government, they’re going to [illegible] their dictator-phobia.”**

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These are the alarming words Curtis Yarvin, who's largely considered the founder of the so-called **Dark Enlightenment**, an idea that's being **used to deceive American youth into supporting the destruction of the Republic and its replacement with a modern technocratic dictatorship.**

The Dark Enlightenment (DE) is a loosely defined intellectual movement that emerged in the early 2010s. Tech-accelerationist wings of the DE even argue that artificial intelligence should be unleashed in government to help lead.

Proponents of the DE claim that "democracy" is a façade to make it appear that the people have a say in their government while in reality Establishment insiders call the shots. Of course, there is some truth in this: There is an invisible, unelected government behind the visible, elected government of the United States, oftentimes called the Deep State. However, the DE misses the brilliance and success of America's constitutional republic and how restoring the *republic* (no, the Founding Fathers did not give us a democracy) is our only hope for saving and restoring our freedoms.

Upending the Enlightenment

Understanding the context behind the phrase "Dark Enlightenment" illuminates and simplifies the nature of the movement.

The DE, sometimes called neo-reactionism, is a radical addendum to the Age of Enlightenment. The Enlightenment occupied about a century of history, mostly in Western European and early American culture, from the late 1600s through the late 1700s.

The Enlightenment was a challenge to absolute authority, monarchy, and aristocracy. Its thinkers, such as English physician and philosopher John Locke — often cited as the thought architect behind the Declaration of Independence — and Charles Montesquieu — a French judge and historian — articulated natural rights and individual liberties.

It was the positive elements of the Enlightenment that fueled the American Revolution, gave inspiration to America's system of government, and helped liberate the New

World from the authoritarianism of the Old World.

The Dark Enlightenment, a term coined by tech-accelerationist Nick Land, wishes to return to elements of what the Enlightenment overcame.

The Man Behind the Movement

While the DE does not have a single leader or party, Curtis Yarvin, a software engineer and political blogger, is generally considered the founder and most influential figure behind the push.

Yarvin, a self-identified “open-minded progressive,” has written nearly a million words online through blog posts, books, and missives published on his blog “Unqualified Reservations”under the pseudonym Mencius Moldbug.

In his works, Yarvin mainly examines the failures of American “democracy” and argues that politics are controlled by an entity he calls the Cathedral. The Cathedral is a decentralized power structure that includes the mainstream media, universities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and parts of the bureaucracy.

According to Yarvin, the Cathedral controls everything and operates on a self-sustaining loop to maintain power and influence. It is what red-pilled patriots would call the Deep State.

But unlike other progressive activists, Yarvin is not advocating for a leftist Congress, progressive Supreme Court justices, or a new Democratic administration in the White House to defeat the Cathedral. Instead, he is advocating that the system itself be completely demolished.

We live in an oligarchy, he argues, the rule of an elite few in the Cathedral. A democracy cannot fix the oligarchy, he says; only a monarchy can.

Anti-Democracy

In response to a 2007 anti-Iraq War blog post titled “The Price of Muscle-Flexing,” Yarvin explained that “Democracy is to power as a lottery is to money. It is a social

mechanism that allows a large number of hominids to feel as if their individual views affect the world, even when the chance of such an effect is negligible." He also wrote, "Voting in a democracy makes you feel powerful, much as playing the lottery makes you feel rich." So what should be done? "If you actually want to change your political system, you have to resign from it. You have to quit, you have to stop voting, and you have to say, 'I don't believe in any of this stuff.' You have no right to political power."

Yarvin is not wrong in calling out democracy as a horrible form of governance. America's Founding Fathers did, too. John Quincy Adams, the sixth U.S. president and son of John Adams, explained: "The experience of all former ages had shown that of all human governments, democracy was the most unstable, fluctuating, and short-lived."

James Madison, the fourth president and an architect of the Constitution, said that "Democracies have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths."

But what Yarvin and his fellow Dark Enlighteners are missing is the brilliance of the U.S. Constitution. The United States is a constitutional republic (rule by law), not a democracy (majority rule). The U.S. Constitution limits the federal government to a few specified powers, while the states and the people retain all other powers not delegated to the federal government by the people (federalism). Moreover, those few powers delegated to the federal government are divided among three branches of government, with each branch possessing constitutional means to check overreach by other branches (checks and balances). The American system is designed to limit government to its proper purpose of protecting our liberties while preventing it from overstepping its constitutional boundaries and becoming a usurper of the rights it is supposed to protect.

While our Constitution is not being followed, and a Deep State does exist, it can be fixed without a dictator. But more on that later.

Eradicating "Dictator-phobia"

In a 2012 speech given at a BIL conference (a self-proclaimed "open, self-organizing, emergent, arts, science, society and technology unconference inspired by the highly-

restrictive TED Conference"), Yarvin claimed that the Declaration of Independence was "ridiculous," and that the U.S. Constitution has not been enforced since the 1860s and is, for all practical purposes, dead. Washington, D.C., he explained, is run by the Cathedral without the consent or input of the public. Any attempt to resurrect the Constitution is futile, he believes.

His solution: the complete and total destruction of America's government and rebuilding the nation as a corporation run by a Silicon Valley start-up-style CEO.

"There's no difference between a CEO and a dictator," he said. "If Americans want to change their government, they're going to have to get over their dictator-phobia."

A logical and obvious criticism of installing a dictator would be pointing out the horrible atrocities that dictatorships have committed — from Stalin to Hitler to Mao.

Yarvin's response: "You need to concentrate that power in a single individual and then just hope somehow that this is the right individual, or close to the right individual."

In an interview with *The New York Times* days before Donald Trump's inauguration, Yarvin explained why he believes a CEO-style dictator would be best: "Look around the room.... Point out everything in the room that was made by a monarchy. These things that we call companies are actually little monarchies.... You see a laptop; that laptop was made by Apple, which is a monarchy."

"Imagine if Apple laptops were made by the California Department of Computing; how horrible would they be?" Yarvin concluded, arguing that the state of California would be better managed by a CEO such as Apple's Tim Cook.

FDR: A Prime Example

The sort of dictator that Yarvin yearns for can be found in the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a favorite example he gives for how a modern CEO dictator might work.

On podcasts, Yarvin often offers a dramatic reading of FDR's first inaugural address from 1933, particularly selecting portions where FDR articulates his desire for vast

executive power:

> “If we are to go forward, we must move as a trained and loyal army willing to sacrifice for the good of a common discipline, because without such discipline no progress is made, no leadership becomes effective....
>
> Action in this image and to this end is feasible under the form of government which we have inherited from our ancestors. Our Constitution is so simple and practical that it is possible always to meet extraordinary needs by changes in emphasis and arrangement without loss of essential form....
>
> It is to be hoped that the normal balance of executive and legislative authority may be wholly adequate to meet the unprecedented task before us. But it may be that an unprecedented demand and need for undelayed action may call for temporary departure from that normal balance of public procedure.
>
> I am prepared under my constitutional duty to recommend the measures that a stricken nation in the midst of a stricken world may require. These measures, or such other measures as the Congress may build out of its experience and wisdom, I shall seek, within my constitutional authority, to bring to speedy adoption.
>
> But in the event that the Congress shall fail to take one of these two courses, and in the event that the national emergency is still critical, I shall not evade the clear course of duty that will then confront me. I shall ask the Congress for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis — broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe.

Yarvin described on Tucker Carlson’s former Fox News show that every 80 or so years, Americans get a more authoritarian president that ushers in a new age of power — Abraham Lincoln and FDR being the most obvious examples. But after FDR and the New Deal, the accumulated power was broken and sent into the Cathedral — the Deep State — where it will remain until the modern dictator appears to fix it.

The Dark Enlightenment: Impacting Youth and Politics

“The actual ways in which my ideas get into circulation are actually mostly through the staffers and younger people who swim through this very online soup,” Yarvis told *The New York Times*.

Indeed, Yarvin’s DE influence online is real and powerful. Despite most Americans having no clue who he is, he has appeared as a guest on Fox’s former show *Tucker Carlson Today*, Charlie Kirk’s podcast, and comedian Tim Dillion’s podcast. He even debated his ideas this year at the Harvard Faculty Club.

The Dark Enlightenment’s ideas are spreading.

In a *Newsweek* article titled “Gen Z is Embracing Dictatorships,” a poll was conducted for the publication with 1,500 eligible voters. Researchers asked if “rule by a strong leader, where a strong leader can make decisions without interference from the legislature or from the courts” would be a good system of government.

“In total 40 percent of Gen Z Americans agreed that ‘rule by a strong leader, where a strong leader can make decisions without interference from the legislature or from the courts’ would be a good system of government for the U.S., versus 27 percent who thought it would be bad,” *Newsweek* reported.

Furthermore, “When asked whether they thought ‘rule by the military’ would be a ‘good or bad system of government for the United States,’ 26 percent of Gen Z answered ‘good’ against 39 percent for ‘bad.’ Among millennials 27 percent replied ‘good’ versus 44 percent for ‘bad.’”

A recent AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll found that the DE’s apathetic approach to voting is starting to stick among younger Americans. The research found that 33 percent of 18-29-year-olds viewed voting as unimportant and irrelevant.

For contrast, in the 2008 presidential election, close to the traceable birth of the DE, over 51 perent of 18–24-year-olds went to the polls, according to The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement. It marked the third-highest

turnout rate among youth since the voting age was lowered to 18. Youth voting has not hit 51 percent since 2008.

Perhaps not directly linked to the DE and Yarvin but still relevant, sympathy for Adolf Hitler and the authoritarian dictatorship of the Third Reich is growing online, particularly among young men. This writer has been monitoring social-media posts, mainly on the platform Instagram, that fantasize Nazism and paint Hitler as a good dictator. The videos receive millions of views, and hundreds of thousands of likes and reposts. Comments on the posts include “He was a hero” and “He fought for greatness.”

The DE has certainly grown in its political influence, but some of the hype surrounding it could be overblown by the Left in an effort to tie Yarvin and DE thinkers to the Trump administration. In particular, leftist publications attempt to link Vice President J.D. Vance to Yarvin, but the evidence for their direct connection is weak. According to Yarvin, he’s only interacted with the vice president once since the election, at an inaugural ball where Vance greeted him with “Yarvin, you reactionary fascist.”

When asked by *Politico* what Yarvin thought Vance meant by the greeting, Yarvin replied: “I don’t think he meant it in a bad way, but I don’t think he meant it in a good way, either.”

While it is unclear exactly what President Trump and Vice President Vance think about the DE, President Trump recently said to the press while discussing cleaning the crime out of Washington, D.C., “A lot of people are saying, ‘Maybe we’d like a dictator.’ I don’t like a dictator. I am not a dictator.”

Whether or not the president was referencing the Dark Enlightenment is unclear. But his anti-dictator stance has been made clear, and this distances him from the neo-reactionaries.

In an interview with CNN in June 2025, a reporter pressed Yarvin on his connection to the Trump world. Yarvin answered, “I think most of my influence on the Trump administration is less through the leadership and more through, like, kids in the administration who read my stuff because my audience is very young.”

In an article titled “Curtis Yarvin’s Ideas Were Fringe. Now They’re Coursing Through Trump’s Washington,” *Politico*attempts to tie the DE directly to the Trump administration as a whole. This is done mainly through Yarvin’s connections with Peter Thiel, founder of the data company Palantir, and Michael Anton, Trump’s director of policy planning staff at the State Department.

While the extent of Yarvin’s influence in Washington is debatable, his influence on American youth is undeniable.

How AI and Big Tech Fit in

A faction of the DE believes that artificial intelligence (AI) should be integrated into government to help root out corruption and aid in the realization of Yarvin’s CEO dictator in “saving” the nation.

The ties between the Dark Enlightenment and Big Tech data companies are worth noting. Peter Thiel’s Founders Fund has partnered with Andreessen Horowitz to invest $1.1 million in Urbit, a decentralized computing system created by Yarvin.

Whether or not Yarvin’s controversial opinions reflect those of Thiel, Yarvin has claimed that Thiel is “fully enlightened,” and that he has been “coaching Thiel.”

Elon Musk’s Grok AI, OpenAI’s ChatGTP, and even Thiel’s Palantir are already being integrated into Washington, D.C., at an alarming pace.

“The notion of algocracy, the notion that algorithms would be the superior way to govern a people — we are in some shade of that already,” Joe Allen, the AI editor for Steve Bannon’s *War Room*, told *The New American*.

The push to integrate AI into government as an advisor, Allen claimed, is currently happening at the White House, the Department of Defense, and many other agencies. A policy document titled “Winning the Race: AMERICA’S AI ACTION PLAN,” released in July, lays out three pillars for AI integration: Accelerate AI innovation, build American AI infrastructure, and lead in international AI diplomacy and security.

“There are a number of contracts going back to the Biden administration and then going forward into the Trump administration with all these different tech companies to do exactly that … from Palantir to even X AI,” Allen revealed. This, he says, is a step on the way to algocracy, rule through the monarchy of AI and its programmers.

Resistance to algocracy is not happening fast enough to catch up with the rapid developments, Allen concluded. Americans should be alarmed.

The *Real* Solution

Montesquieu said, “When once a republic is corrupted, there is no possibility of remedying any of the growing evils but by removing the corruption and restoring its lost principles; every other correction is either useless or a new evil.”

Using Montesquieu’s wisdom to frame the solution reveals that returning to the lost principles of Americanism is our only hope. Educating fellow citizens on individual Christian self-government (personal responsibility), America’s founding documents, the separation of powers, and federalism is key. As The John Birch Society’s founder Robert Welch proclaimed, “Education is our total strategy, and truth is our only weapon.”

America’s constitutional system of government is brilliant. Citizens are the political sovereigns, delegating governing responsibilities to elected officials, who are bound by the chains of the Constitution. The solution to corruption is not giving more power to a dictator, which is what America claimed independence from in 1776.

The solution is an educational revival of everyday Americans to reignite the flames of liberty to reclaim power over the Republic through elections, accountability, and law.

While the Dark Enlightenment correctly diagnoses Deep State corruption, its solutions are top-down fixes. Historically speaking, the concentration of power in one individual has always led to greed, corruption, and abuse. As British historian Lord Acton explained, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

Only a bottom-up, citizen-led revival will turn the tide.

In a January 2024 interview with Charlie Kirk, Yarvin said, “This whole idea on the American Right that we’re going to start by restoring the virtue of the American people, and first we are going to make virtuous people and then the virtuous people are going to strike back … it is just impossible. It is never going to work…. You have to basically lay down all of these ideals that have been stolen and been corrupted and say, no, actually. It was an amazing experiment; we tried it, it kind of worked for a while, but now we are going to go back to some version of the form of government [monarchy] that 99 percent of human beings have been governed by for 99 percent of history.”

The Founding Fathers would revolt at this notion. England’s King George III said of then General George Washington that if he resigned his authority and refused to be an American monarch, he would be “the greatest man in the world.” Washington did just that, knowing that America could not survive under the rule of a king.

Instead, Washington held that “The power under the Constitution will always be in the people. It is entrusted for certain defined purposes, and for a certain limited period, to representatives of their own choosing; and whenever it is executed contrary to their interest, or not agreeable to their wishes, their servants can, and undoubtedly will, be recalled.”

The way to restore America is for the people to reclaim their power, vote out corruption, and become locally engaged. True and lasting change will always come from the bottom up, not the top down.

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